Community Volunteers as Ambassadors of Peace: Strategies for Conflict Resolution and Management in Laikipia West Sub-County

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Abstract
This study investigates the role of peace ambassadors in conflict resolution within Laikipia West, Kenya, where inter-ethnic tensions have historically been exacerbated through drought and resource scarcity. Utilizing qualitative methods, this study involved in-depth interviews with peace ambassadors and local chiefs to understand their motivations, community perceptions, conflict challenges, and resolution strategies. Findings reveal that peace ambassadors are distinguished community leaders driven by a profound commitment to peace. Peace ambassadors use their local knowledge and cultural understanding to mediate disputes. They adopt a proactive, directive approach to conflict resolution, focusing on calming tensions, listening to both sides and guiding parties toward mutual understanding and forgiveness. The study highlights the importance of integrating traditional conflict resolution methods with contemporary practices, suggesting a hybrid model that preserves cultural integrity while fostering effective legal accountability. Furthermore, it recommends replicating the model in other areas and advocates for a multi-level approach that addresses issues such as structural and cultural violence, intending to promote positive peace and address the symptoms and root causes.

Keywords: Conflict management, peace ambassadors, Laikipia West, village elders, volunteers

Introduction
Globally, the potential of community volunteers in peacebuilding is increasingly being recognized (Lough & Mwathi, 2012; Bounemra et al., 2020). Community volunteers are vital contributors to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies (UNV, 2014; Milesi & Lopez, 2020). In Kenya, there are notable examples of how the involvement of community volunteers has led to significant peaceful outcomes, particularly during the 2007 post-election violence when the Neighbourhood Volunteer Scheme (NVS) was implemented (UNV, 2014). However, a critical question arises: Can these initiatives be sustainable over the long term? How can volunteers effectively play a role in preventing conflicts before they escalate? Addressing these questions is essential for maximizing the impact of volunteer efforts in peacebuilding and ensuring their sustainability.

Research about conflict management in African societies shows that traditional conflict management methods exist within communities. According to Pkalya et al. (2004), indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms rely on local actors and traditional community-based judicial and legal decision-making processes to resolve conflicts within or between communities. Research has also emphasized the crucial role of elders in African societies, which have remained resilient despite the impact of colonialism and the introduction of Western legal systems. In Africa, traditional justice systems have been in place for centuries,

with elders playing a vital role in resolving disputes (Kariuki, 2015). In Kenya, elders play a significant role as volunteers in public governance (Mutua & Kiruhi, 2021). The contribution of elders is particularly relevant to this study, as many peace ambassadors are also village elders. This overlap may suggest similarities in their roles and responsibilities.

Kenyan society is characterized by a strong emphasis on ethnic identity, with many individuals identifying strongly with their ethnic group. Furthermore, there are significant differences in the way of living between farmers and those who are pastoralists, which can lead to clashes between these two groups, especially during drought, when grazing ground is scarce and water is limited. In addition, cattle rustling has been a persistent problem among pastoral communities in Kenya, particularly among the Pokot, Turkana, and Samburu tribes. This has also affected the life in some areas in Laikipia West (Ogeto, 2023). Laikipia West is a constituency in Laikipia County, located in central Kenya. This area is known for its diverse landscapes, including semi-arid areas. Laikipia West is notorious for its history of inter-ethnic conflicts and violence, which encompasses both direct and indirect forms of harm.

According to Wanjiku et al. (2023), the roots of these conflicts can be traced back to the colonial era. The displacement of pastoralists and the purchase of farms by colonizers led to the settlement of other groups as workforce for the farms, creating tension and competition for resources. The authors state that factors such as strong ethnic identity, political tensions, inadequate pastures, and compromised political systems contribute to these conflicts.

In Laikipia West, conflicts have historically plagued the region due to tensions between diverse ethnic groups, which were exacerbated by the devastating effects of drought. Recognizing the gravity of the situation, St Martin, a faith-based, community-driven organization in Nyahururu-Kenya, has responded by partnering with volunteers from various sub-locations in Laikipia West Subcounty. These dedicated individuals have been designated peace ambassadors, working tirelessly to foster harmony and understanding within their communities. The researcher had the opportunity to meet with peace ambassadors from four distinct sub-locations, conducting in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. This study aimed to explore how volunteer initiatives, particularly the activities of peace ambassadors, influence conflict resolution and contribute to sustainable peace in Laikipia West.

It is crucial to explore the motivations and experiences of these peace ambassadors, the nature of the conflicts they encounter, and their collaborative efforts with local chiefs. This exploration aimed to evaluate whether this volunteer-driven approach is a viable and replicable solution for fostering peaceful communities.

Theory and Method

This study employed Galtung's concepts of peace and violence alongside grassroots-level peace approaches. Johan Galtung distinguished between negative peace, defined as the absence of direct physical violence, and positive peace, which involves building constructive relationships characterized by access to basic human needs (food, shelter, healthcare, education, and security), fair resource distribution, and active participation in decision-making (Galtung, 1969). He also defines violence as the gap between the potential and actual fulfilment of human needs. Lederach (1997) expanded on Galtung's theories by emphasizing the need to address peace at various levels including the grassroots, meso, and macro. He argued for the integration of local knowledge and agency in peace processes, asserting that those most affected by conflict should actively participate in peacebuilding efforts.

The study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the rich insights and stories of the peace ambassadors, seeking to capture their nuanced perspectives and experiences. Nine participants were interviewed, including seven peace ambassadors and two chiefs from various sub-locations. Two peace ambassadors' interviews were translated from Kiswahili to English.

The interviews were conducted during two exchange visits between peace ambassadors from different sub-locations, allowing for a unique opportunity to gather diverse perspectives.

Table 1: Demography of the Peace Ambassadors

Participant	Gender and Age	Education Level
Peace Ambassador 1	Male, 30 years old	Diploma
Peace Ambassador 2	Female, 44 years (Interview translated)	Primary school
Peace Ambassador 3	Female, 46 years	Secondary school
Peace Ambassador 4	Female 50 years (interview translated)	Primary school
Peace Ambassador 5	Male, 45 years	Primary school. Did not finish secondary school
Peace Ambassador 6	Female 36 years	Primary school. Dropped secondary school
Peace Ambassador 7	Male, 42 years	Primary school
Chief 1	Male	Not known, at least secondary school
Chief 2	Male	Not known, at least secondary school

The interviews were first transcribed. Thereafter, inductive content analysis (Mayring, 2000) was conducted with the support of Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDA) lite software. In addition to the initial interviews, nine additional peace ambassadors were interviewed using the Kiswahili language. The objective of the additional interviews was to gather a more diverse range of responses, including those from peace ambassadors who had not had the opportunity to attend school. The results of these interviews were incorporated into this study.

Findings and Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of peace ambassadors and their approaches to resolving conflicts within their communities. To achieve this, the first step was to explore how these volunteers perceived and described their communities. This provides a foundation for understanding their perspective on the social, cultural, and environmental contexts in which they operate.

Peace Ambassadors and Perceptions of Their Communities

The peace ambassadors talked at length about the challenges of explaining their perceptions of the communities to which they belonged. They further described their communities as very cosmopolitan, thereby promoting cohesive co-existence, though this was not always the case.

Challenges in the community: Poverty, unemployment, drug abuse and domestic violence

The interviewed peace ambassadors and area chiefs come from four distinct sub-locations, providing diverse perspectives. Regarding the economic status, peace ambassadors highlighted the pervasive economic crisis and its related challenges in their respective areas, which worsens in times of lack of harvest because of drought.

> *Some are very hungry. Some have spent even two days without food. There is a lot of conflict there in our areas. Between men and women. In marriages there is a lot of difficulty. It is due to the problem of poverty in that area. Because it is an area which is not developed.* Peace Ambassador. (PA) 6.

Peace ambassadors in this study identified a strong correlation between poverty and domestic violence, as well as a connection between poverty/unemployment and drug abuse, particularly among the youth. These observations suggest that economic instability can have far-reaching consequences, perpetuating cycles of violence and substance abuse within communities.

According to the interviewees, many young people struggle to complete their education due to financial constraints, leading to feelings of despair and depression. The lack of job opportunities only adds to their frustration, leaving them without a sense of purpose or direction. This can have devastating effects on their mental health, self-esteem, and overall well-being, which also can lead to drug abuse.

Peace ambassadors from pastoralist communities emphasize that many children still do not attend school. However, others noted that the situation is improving and that positive changes are occurring. One peace ambassador remarked that people nowadays value education more than before. Additionally, the rights of women have been enhanced:

> *Today, women have the right to say yes or no, unlike before, when they were simply receiving direction and communication.* (PA15).

A cosmopolitan community
Several respondents described their communities as cosmopolitan hubs where people from diverse ethnic backgrounds coexist in harmony:

> *This community are good people. They are not bad. They understand one another. They live together. They co-exist. Even if they are of different tribes, they co-exist together.* (Area Chief 1)

While the peace ambassador described the community as peaceful, it was evident that conflicts simmered beneath the surface. This paradox highlights community dynamics' complex and multifaceted nature, where coexistence and cooperation exist alongside tensions and disagreements.

> *Many times, the children go to graze from different places, and maybe sometimes the cows go beyond eating somebody's things in the garden. So that one causes a bit of conflict.* (PA 2, *translated*)

The interviewee hints at conflicts in the community, suggesting that the community is not as peaceful as described. Her description of children allowing cows to graze in restricted areas implies that this is a recurring issue. Her explanation that the conflict is due to children being careless rather than a deliberate act may be an attempt to downplay the problem.

One peace ambassador emphasized that the different tribes live in co-existence, but that that was not always the case. He recalled a violent conflict between the Pokots and Samburu in 2007, which was eventually settled. According to him, the Samburu emerged victorious, forcing the Pokots to leave their land (PA 5). This narrative challenges the notion that the different tribes coexist peacefully. The peace ambassador's assertion that there is peace in the area today suggests a trivialized view of conflict, implying that it only refers to violent situations. However, a closer examination reveals that the reality may be more nuanced. For instance, injustices and disputes over land ownership create an atmosphere of tension and unease. The fact that the community does not own the land they inhabit and that the landowners are afraid to settle indicates a deep-seated problem that is not being addressed.

Well, most people living in this area, they don't own land because of historical injustices. The previous regimes brought people outside this county and they were allocated land, (...) And now those who actually legally own the land, fear to come and settle there. Because they fear their lives. (PA 5)

When asked about specific cases he dealt with, the peace ambassador recalled a particularly violent dispute involving herders and farmers that escalated to the point of arrows being used. His matter-of-fact tone, however, belied the gravity of the situation, suggesting that, for him, it was just another ordinary case:

Recently, there was a conflict between one family around here. The Samburu boys, the herders, came and grazed on somebody's shamba, on somebody's garden. And the war broke out with arrows. With arrows, and people were injured. But we settled that one. (PA 5)

Another peace ambassador noted that while they live in harmony, conflicts tend to arise when the river dries up, leading to tensions between farmers and pastoralists (PA 13). Interestingly, according to a chief of another zone, these kinds of violent conflicts are less in his sub-location. Meanwhile, he confidently asserted that his region was peaceful, with minimal violence:

We normally have some minor cases like, you know, petty theft is normal. In some areas, you find a boy stealing a chicken, and somebody stealing a goat, but you don't also have that magnitude. (...) like killing or whatever, we have never had that. But normally, you have some theft, but not those ones of violence. Armed thieves, we have never had these in our area. (Area Chief 2).

It is striking to note that the chief´s understanding of violence is limited to physical harm and theft, overlooking the deeper social and cultural complexities at play.

Meanwhile, a chief from a different region expressed a starkly contrasting perspective. He emphasized that his community is actively working towards living in harmony and that they prioritize peaceful coexistence:

These people try to be peaceful always. (...) Yes, they are peaceful people. They are trying to be peaceful always. Even in this area of ours, we don't have a police post in this area. The whole sub-location there is no police post. So, they are living all together peacefully. (Area chief 1)

This statement raises questions about the relationship between law enforcement and conflict. In addition, when someone says they always try to be peaceful, several questions emerge: Does this mean they actively avoid conflicts, or is it a guiding life attitude? Alternatively, does 'trying' suggest they do not always succeed but remain committed to peace? The answer may lie in a combination of these interpretations.

Types of Conflicts Peace Ambassadors Attend To
A description of challenges within the community already mirrors the key issues that peace ambassadors address. These issues include:
1. Conflicts between herders and farmers: Conflicts between herders and farmers are a persistent problem exacerbated by drought-induced resource scarcity.

2. Domestic violence and challenges between couples: One of the most prominent conflicts is domestic violence. As already mentioned, the economic crisis and domestic violence seem to be related to each other.

3. Cases of child marriage, defilement, female genital mutilation, and other illegal practices that are brought before the courts.

Peace ambassadors not only address conflicts but also focus on education and awareness. They provide information on human rights and promote a culture of peace by raising awareness about children's rights, domestic violence, and harmful practices like female genital mutilation and early marriage. They aim to create a more harmonious and just community through these efforts.

Peace Ambassadors and Advocacy for Peace: What Motivates them?

The peace ambassadors interviewed are respected leaders within their communities, often referred to as 'natural leaders'. Many of them hold leadership positions within multiple community groups, demonstrating their strong influence and connection with their communities. Their exceptional leadership skills are a defining characteristic, and a strong spiritual conviction underscores their role. Many believe that their talent is God-given, and they see themselves as vessels for serving their community (PA 5). Some describe it as a calling from their heart:

> *... it is a calling from my heart. I love to help people. I love peace. I love to solve difficulties in our area. (...) I love to help people, to do good, to help people. Where I meet conflict, I try to solve.* (PA 6)

This inner drive is their primary motivation for this work, and they find personal fulfilment when they can contribute to resolving community issues. Many express a shared vision of creating a community where conflicts are minimal, and harmony prevails. The wish to have the ability and the health to serve the community can be very deep.

> *Sometimes I get sick. I admit myself. I am sick. I have a problem. But I told God to give me courage and to heal me. So that I can continue in that serving community.* (PA 6)

When asked about their advice for someone seeking to become a peace ambassador, they emphasize the importance of volunteering and self-sacrifice. They stress that being a peace ambassador is not a paid profession but a calling requiring commitment and availability. They must be prepared to put aside personal interests and dedicate themselves fully to the role, always ready to respond to emerging situations that demand their attention.

> *This is a job that you can be called, from the weird hours of the night. This is a job, a crisis can, you know, a crisis that can't send an alarm, or give you a prior notice.* (PA 1)

Furthermore, a peace ambassador should be a vigilant individual who is well-versed in the conflicts and needs of their community, staying informed about local issues and being able to respond promptly to emerging conflicts or crises, acting swiftly and effectively to prevent escalation and promote reconciliation. In addition, peace ambassadors state that their role is to raise awareness in all day-to-day activities and wherever they go. Despite their humble economic circumstances, peace ambassadors are ordinary community members who farm small plots and attend to animals. What sets them apart is not their background or occupation

but their commitment to serving as mediators and facilitators. In fact, their lack of formal employment frees them up to devote more time and energy to their peacebuilding work (PA 5).

One respondent mentioned two things that qualify him, especially for this job as a peace ambassador. One is that he travelled when he was younger and got an understanding of the diverse cultures within Kenya.

> *So, if you have moved and mingled with different tribes, then that means you're experienced. You understand the cultural practices of every community around here. So, it's easier.* (PA 5)

Other interviewees did not mention this. However, it was highlighted that it is important for them to have exposure visits and exchanges with peace ambassadors from other areas. The other thing the peace ambassador mentioned is that he has more knowledge, has the skill of acquiring knowledge, and wants to share the knowledge he has:

> *To assist those people who are not aware of their rights. Maybe myself, I've gone to school at a certain level, although I've not gone far, because of financial. (...) The little I know; I like to share with them.* (PA 5)

Alongside their commitment to peacebuilding, peace ambassadors share a common trait; a desire to disseminate their knowledge and experiences. However, it is noteworthy that most of them have not pursued extensive formal education; some of them did not have the chance to go to school but still see themselves as 'knowledgeable person' (PA 15). Instead, their strengths lie in their ability to understand concepts, 'be sound in mind' (PA 13), communicate effectively, and share their knowledge with others.

Furthermore, several key qualities are considered essential for effective peace ambassadors, including being in harmony with their own family and neighbours, as well as possessing inner peace. These qualities enable them to approach conflicts with empathy and understanding.

> *One thing. First. Your home has to be in peace. And in a good family. You have to have peace inside.* (PA 6)

In addition to sharing their knowledge and being in harmony with their community, peace ambassadors must also possess emotional intelligence and mental stability. This enables them to remain calm and composed in the face of conflict, allowing them to approach disputes with a clear head and a willingness to listen. One peace ambassador states how she approaches a situation where there is conflict:

> *But sometimes when dealing with some of these issues. These issues, she first calms down and goes to them and talks to them both relaxed, with peace at heart.* (PA 4, translated)

This leads us to the next question on how peace ambassadors manage conflicts.

Peace Ambassadors and Management of Conflicts

When arriving at a conflict scene, a peace ambassador's role is to de-escalate the situation and unite the opposing parties. However, this task is not always easy. One peace ambassador shared

that she sometimes has to temporarily withdraw from the scene until tensions calm down (PA 2, *translated*). This challenge underscores why they often work in teams.

After calming the situation, the next step is to listen to both parties involved. Therefore, peace ambassadors must possess strong listening skills. They first patiently listen to both sides while trying to be neutral. After that, they help the parties to resolve their conflict. According to the chief, a key competency of being a peace ambassador is that they should also be able to solve problems (Chief 1). Here, he is in agreement with other peace ambassadors who state that the peace ambassador has to be focused and good at problem-solving. This also hints at how they resolve the conflicts:

> *Whenever there is a problem somewhere, they do contact me, I go visit the household, I counsel them, and I always leave that place, when there is a completion of every problem, and they always do appreciate.* (PA 3)

It appears that the term 'counselling and advising' in conflict resolution involves active listening, where one first seeks to understand the nature of the problem before offering a solution. This approach aligns with statements that expect the peace ambassador to be focused and able to make informed decisions. Notably, one peace ambassador has extended this role to her own family:

> *Whenever there is something, even my elder sister does consult me, so I am the final person to decide on what or have the decision on the problem that should be solved.* (PA 3)

After listening to each party, peace ambassadors strive to convey the value of peaceful conflict resolution to both sides. (PA 2, *translated*). Doing so aims to create a sense of mutual understanding and encourage parties to work towards a peaceful resolution.

> *We show them that fighting is not a solution to a conflict. It's good to settle cases amicably (...) we talk to them. Yes, we find an agreement. (...) When they agree, we tell the owner of the animals to compensate. So, we tell, we advise the pastoralists.* (PA 5)

The interviewees' responses show that after listening to the problem, they try to convince the parties. It seems that peace ambassadors are sometimes not neutral anymore. They make the grazers understand that they were wrong. For them, it is important that the grazers understand.

> *When we meet two people's fighting, we call them there. See, this is a shamba for someone, (...) Yes, we talk to farmer and also to the grazer. When we come, there is peace Yes, when we talk to them, there is peace. And they forgive each other.* (PA 4)

Sometimes they have to talk a lot until they convince them. At the end of the conflict, they should forgive each other.

The analysis of the interviews reveals that most disputes between herders and farmers are resolved through a simple yet effective approach: The perpetrator agrees to compensate for the damages. In contrast, cases of domestic violence or marital problems are typically addressed by emphasizing the importance of harmony within the relationship. The peace ambassadors'

collaborative approach is noteworthy, as they often work in teams to provide mutual support. Interestingly, one young man felt constrained in offering advice to married couples due to his own unmarried status. To overcome this limitation, he sought the guidance of a respected village elder.

> *For example, on a particular day, my neighbour, they had this domestic, you know gender-based violence. And we have been told also that, as a topic in St. Martin, during our teachings, community teachings, that women. women normally face this gender-based violence, especially in marriages. And previously, I was not capacity-built on how to deal with a married couple. Because by that time I wasn't married, I was just living alone.* (PA 1*)*

This statement highlights the positive impact of the training by St. Martin CSA in Nyahururu-Kenya, on the peace ambassadors. Notably, the peace ambassadors have become more proactive in addressing domestic violence cases, demonstrating a significant shift in their approach. Moreover, this example illustrates an important lesson: that experience and credibility are crucial when offering guidance. In this instance, the peace ambassador recognized the importance of seeking the wisdom of a village elder better equipped to advise a married couple. They went together to the couple and tried to understand the conflict and give guidance. They were advised that '*they shouldn't escalate the conflict higher, because it will cause them more conflicts, and they will regret later. (…). And since then, they have been staying happily'.* (PA 1)

In summary, the peace ambassadors employ a four-step approach to address conflicts in the community. Firstly, they intervene by calming the situation and gathering information by speaking separately with both parties involved. Next, they emphasize the importance of resolving conflicts amicably and having peaceful coexistence. The third step involves persuading both parties to reach a mutually beneficial agreement, often by taking sides in disputes, such as requiring the responsible party to compensate for damages. In cases of domestic violence, they focus on promoting harmonious relationships. The last step is to help both parties acknowledge their mistakes. The goal is to foster forgiveness, with the offending party taking responsibility for their actions.

Chiefs and Peace Ambassadors

According to the chiefs interviewed, peace ambassadors play a crucial role in maintaining peace in the area. They are the ones who know the community best, having a deep understanding of the neighbourhood. As one chief noted, they have the community 'at their fingertips' and keep their 'eyes and ears open' (Chief 1). This proximity to the community allows them to effectively address conflicts before they escalate.

The Area Chief explains how tribal clashes can arise from minor incidents, such as fights between children from different tribes. 'If one party reacts aggressively, it can escalate tensions, leading to involvement from others supporting their respective tribes. Conflicts can quickly spiral out of control without the intervention of peace ambassadors to manage and de-escalate the situation' (Area Chief 1).

The peace ambassadors' diverse ethnic backgrounds, which mirror the community's, are a significant advantage. This diversity allows them to understand and relate to the community's concerns, making them effective mediators in calming down tense situations. Moreover, their familiarity with the community is a major strength, as they are able to tap into their knowledge and connections to address conflicts.

The peace ambassadors see their autonomy from government institutions as a major advantage. Unlike the adversarial approach taken by the police and courts, their approach

prioritizes dialogue and understanding, leading to more peaceful outcomes. Moreover, when conflicts are resolved through official channels, such as the police and courts, the parties involved often emerge with feelings of resentment and hostility (PA 1).

Peace Ambassadors argue that some conflicts cannot be resolved by the government alone and require a more amicable approach. In cases of personal disputes that escalate into violence, government intervention often leads to legal consequences, such as arrests and court prosecutions, which can further worsen animosity between the parties involved.

In contrast, the peace ambassadors' approach focuses on calming the situation and finding a mutually acceptable agreement between the parties. One peace ambassador noted that this approach often yields a win-win outcome. Moreover, this method is more peaceful and significantly faster than other conflict resolution methods.

> *They (the community) think the peace ambassadors are doing a good job, because they resolve some of these issues even without involving a court. And it's kind of. It's a more efficient. And more faster way. To resolve some of the issues and some of the conflicts within the community without involving the court.* (PA 4)

The peace ambassadors' approach resolves conflicts more quickly and peacefully and prioritizes privacy. When cases arise in the community, the peace ambassador is the usually first contact. The peace ambassadors then assess whether they can manage the cases themselves.

> *Just to reconcile, to reconcile and settle those cases which are out of court, but the serious cases we forward to the court.* (PA 5)

According to the peace ambassadors, they hand over the cases of criminal offences to the government structures through the chief. Such offences are also cases of child abuse, defilement, early marriages, and female genital mutilation. One peace ambassador notes that these cases are quite frequent in his area. The peace ambassadors focus on providing information about these issues, as they have been officially recognized as crimes against humanity, leaving legal action to the government. In addition, when cases cannot be calmed down, they involve the chief and the police, as already discussed.

Conclusions

This study has emphasized the pivotal roles played by peace ambassadors from St. Martin CSA in conflict resolution across their communities in Laikipia West, Kenya. These individuals, sharing similar socioeconomic backgrounds with their neighbours, differentiate themselves through their outstanding leadership qualities and commitment to fostering social harmony.

Collaborating closely with local chiefs, peace ambassadors leverage their standing within the community and cultural insights to mediate disputes, particularly between pastoralists and farmers, as well as married couples. Their conflict intervention emphasizes principles of forgiveness, mutual understanding, and amicable resolutions. Unlike professional mediators, peace ambassadors adopt a proactive and directive approach, actively calming conflict situations and persuading disputants toward reconciliation. This model deviates from the more neutral stance typically embraced by mediators, who prioritize facilitating open dialogues and allowing parties to navigate their own solutions. The approach utilized by peace ambassadors appears to draw significantly from traditional methods of conflict resolution instead of Western strategies that have often been found to be ineffective in African contexts since they may not adequately address the unique cultural, social, and historical realities that shape conflicts within local communities.

Integrating peace ambassadors and village elders in Kenya presents a significant opportunity for effective conflict resolution. Their collaboration with government institutions exemplifies a balanced approach that respects cultural traditions while adhering to established legal frameworks. This hybrid model successfully combines community-centred traditional methods with contemporary systems rooted in the community's unique experiences. The partnership between government representatives and local leaders holds considerable promise for achieving sustainable development goals. However, the application of this collaboration should extend beyond conflict situations to serve as a proactive measure for fostering an inclusive society. Consequently, there is a pressing need for policy reforms that facilitate the incorporation of traditional conflict resolution practices into formal governmental structures.

It is recommended that the role of peace ambassadors be recognised. In this respect, they should be empowered within local governance structures to enhance their influence and effectiveness in conflict resolution. There is need to provide resources for community-led initiatives. This should be able to support grassroots conflict resolution programmes led by community members while ensuring that local voices are prioritized in peacebuilding efforts. Finally, partnerships should be encouraged. This will foster collaboration between local organizations and government bodies to strengthen collective capacities for conflict resolution and promote shared responsibility in maintaining peace. These initiatives should be implemented broadly to address not only ethnic conflicts but also other societal challenges, as peace ambassadors also advocate for children's rights, gender equality, and the elimination of harmful practices.

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